*EDLD 5364:8035 Reflection*

I am opening this reflection with a series of quotes….

The first is from the final paragraphs of the document published by the National Academy Press in 2000.

*In thinking about technology, the framework of creating learning environ-  
ments that are learner, knowledge, assessment, and community centered   
is also useful. There are many ways that technology can be used to help   
create such environments, both for teachers and for the students whom they teach. Many issues arise in considering how to educate teachers to use new technologies effectively. What do they need to know about learning processes? About the technology? What kinds of training are most effective for helping teachers use high-quality instructional programs? What is the best way to use technology to facilitate teacher learning?*

In looking back, via the magic of technology, it seems that even as these questions were being asked, other researchers were suggesting research based technology enhanced applications of the popular learning theories, Constructivism and Connectivism . According to the authors of the 1999 article, *Learning as a Personal Event: A Brief Introduction to Constructivism,* “Constructivism is a theory of learning, but it does not dictate how that theory should be translated into classroom practice. It is up to teachers and other educators to provide environments that support the ways students learn--learner-centered classrooms.”(2) At the time, the next question, was, “ What is technology’s role in creating the learner-centered classroom.” The above article supplies a partial answer,

“Technology amplifies the resources teachers can offer their students. Rather than relying on the textbook for content, computers can provide online access to content experts and up-to-date information from original sources. Reference materials on CD-ROMs and curriculum assistance from high quality software offer many more resource opportunities than most classrooms or school libraries could provide.” (16)

How has this/will this change how teachers prepare to teach their students? The biggest impact I see, is that traditional textbooks are no longer the best resource for daily instruction. In order to keep instruction current as they prepare, teachers are choosing to use current, safe, and accurate internet resources with interactive tools to provide basic information. They then move beyond this into learner-centered student inquiry and research to increase the breadth and depth of student subject knowledge.

In order to support these interactive learner-centered activities, teachers must be adept at data collection, determining what types of projects lend themselves to guiding student learning in the necessary directions; moderating the processes, redirecting students when necessary, and making sure all students are challenged appropriately. Initially and finally, teachers use of technology applications must be fluid in order to keep the learning activities centered on the academic topics, not on the technology it takes to enable the project. Which partially answers are initial questions. Today’s teachers must have excellent research and technology integration skills that extend beyond using email and the internet to collect data for creating power point presentations, but now extend to include helping students create pod casts, web blogs, picture stories, animations, online surveys,etc.

Learning about the Constructivist theories this week has explained much. The way I see it, authors, Solomon & Schrum, in their book, W*eb 2.0: New tools, New schools.*hit the nail on the proverbial head when they stated.. “The goal is to provide an education that prepares students to have 21st century skills and also to ace the test without breaking a stride," (51).

Based upon my own experience and what my classmates have said, classroom experiences created applying the constructionist's approach to allow students to utilize available resources to construct their topic knowledge can lead to deeper and broader subject knowledge which is what we are told the new Texas STAAR assessments will assess. Although it is challenging to apply, it appears that the Constructivist’s approach is a research based proven method to solve the dilemma and school district administrators wishing to help their teachers continue their records of excellence as the STAAR assessments become reality will be ahead of the curve if they invest professional development funds and time to instruct seasoned teachers how to incorporate constructionist's methods into their current teaching processes.

Teaching teachers to create learner-centered classrooms utilizing technology to develop deeper and broader subject knowledge will provide critical tools essential to our students’ successes in two areas that will directly impact their future. Their acquisition of knowledge and skills will be tested first by statewide assessments, but more importantly, their skills will and knowledge will be tested as they embark on their post educational careers. If we have succeeded, they will be successful test takers and successful life-long learners and leaders who adapt to the constantly changing global economy with the ensuing changes to global, national, and local economies, businesses, and job markets.

Resources:

(1999) Learning as a Personal Event: A Brief Introduction to Constructivism. Southwest   
 Educational Development Laboratory Retrieved Oct. 4, 2009 from   
 http://www.sedl.org/pubs/tec26/intro2c.html

How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School: Expanded Edition   
 downloaded from : http://www.nap.edu/catalog/9853.html , March 2, 2012.

Solomon, G. & Schrum, L. (2007). *Web 2.0: New tolls, New schools. Eugene, OR:   
 International Society for Technology in Education, 7 – 44.*

*Week 1 Final Word.*

Week 1 Final Word:

I liked the quote below because it is my belief that technology tools enable teachers to more easily create a set of processes to apply or have students apply to enable subject understanding that they do not easily grasp otherwise.It means teachers are free to try what works without constraints of a rigid curriculum.

“Constructivism is a theory of learning, but it does not dictate how that theory should be translated into classroom practice. It is up to teachers and other educators to provide environments that support the ways students learn--learner-centered classrooms.”

In reviewing the comments my classmates have made, I get the feeling that several of us are in the same boat. We agree that applying the "Constructivist" theory in our classrooms will create an open exploratory environment in which our students are not afraid to experiment and take risks. It seems that at least two people have been instructed to fully implement "Constructivist" methods, but chose to leave those employments are now employed in districts utilizing more traditional instructional methods; another who left employment because she chose to implement the theory in a district that did not support it's use; and still others who report they utilize a kind of "hybrid" approach. Our mini discussion leads me to agree with Shanna James comment, "the learning environment is key to a successful classroom." With this I agree, as long as the teacher creates an open environment of acceptance that exudes welcome and equality among all the students in the class, the students will warm to that individual and do their very best to achieve whatever goals she/he helps them set for their own learning each year.

The way I see it, authors, Solomon & Schrum, in their book, W*eb 2.0: New tolls, New schools.*hit the nail on the proverbial head when they stated that "the problem is that while teachers are being challenged to, " prepare students for the 21st century--to use higher order thinking skills, apply technology, adapt to change, acquire workplace skills, and more" ...they are simultaneously being forced to focus .."on standards, standardized tests and accountability, which lend themselves to traditional teacher directed instruction. Because, "the test" is the ultimate determinant of success, many think the process is easy--teach what will be tested. However, two dangers exist: one is in not measuring what really matters even if it will matter more in the future. The other is in narrowing instruction to the exclusion of anything more than test test materials....The goal is to provide an education that prepares students to have 21st century skills and also to ace the test without breaking a stride," (51). Based upon my own experience and what my classmates have said, classroom experiences created applying the constructionist's approach to allow students to utilize available resources to construct their topic knowledge can lead to deeper and broader subject knowledge which is what we are told the new Texas STAAR assessments will assess. Although it is challenging to apply, it appears that the Constructivist’s approach is a research based proven method to solve the dilemma and school district administrators wishing to help their teachers continue their records of excellence as the STAAR assessments become reality will be ahead of the curve if they invest professional development funds and time to instruct seasoned teachers how to incorporate constructionist's methods into their current teaching processes.

Resources:

(1999) Learning as a Personal Event: A Brief Introduction to Constructivism. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, (1999). Learning as a personal event: A brief introduction to constructivism. Retrieved Oct. 4, 2009 from http://www.sedl.org/pubs/tec26/intro2c.html

Solomon, G. & Schrum, L. (2007). *Web 2.0: New tools, New schools. Eugene, OR: International Society for Technology in Education, 7 – 44. (Note: I downloaded this book into my Android devices Kindle App I have not been able to locate the page number from which my above reference originated. The quote  
begins 5 lines under the topic "The Challenge." - it took 51 finger swishes to get to chapter 1, page 1)*